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ABSTRACT

Evaluation and results of a statewide promotional campaign using billboards featuring Johnny Cash to promote public awareness of, and recruitment for, Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs in Ohio are presented with the highlights of the purchasing and distribution activities. Response to a questionnaire sent to all ABE directors in Ohio requesting information on their participation in and/or effectiveness of the advertising campaign in their region provides information in the following areas: (1) distribution, cost, length of time displayed and awareness of displays; (2) public response to, and awareness of, the promotion and the effects on recruitment; (3) ideas for new and continued promotional efforts; and (4) positive responses of a majority of ABE directors and their recommendation for statewide sponsorship of future public awareness and recruitment programs centered on a "theme" or a personality." The questionnaire is included. (JW)

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USING BILLBOARD POSTERS TO PROMOTE ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PUBLIC AWARENESS AND RECRUITMENT IN OHIO

PROGRAM REPORT

SUBMITTED BY:

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SCIOTO VALLEY LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

PIKETON, OHIO

NOVEMBER, 1982

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INTRODUCTION

The "Johnny Cash" billboard poster campaign, to promote public awareness of, and recruitment for the Adult Basic Education Programs throughout Ohio, was an extension of a similar effort conducted in Tennessee during 1981.

Mr. Luke Easter, Tennessee Department of Education Supervisor of Adult Education, contacted Johnny Cash, after his appearance in "The Pride of Jesse Hallam", a film about the adverse effects of adult illiteracy and the dramatic changes basic literacy instruction can bring about. Mr. Cash readily agreed to participate in a campaign to reduce illiteracy.

Tennessee anti-literacy campaign utilized Billboard messages featuring Johnny Cash as well as Johnny Cash television and radio spot announcements.

The Ohio Department of Education displayed one of the small Billboard Posters at its July, 1981, ABE Director's Meeting and discussed the possible use of such posters in Ohio.

The directors' response was positive and permission was given to have the posters reproduced for distribution in Ohio through a special Demonstration Project.

The Scioto Valley Local School District of Pike County, Ohio, was selected to administer the Project, which entailed the acquisition and distribution of Johnny Cash Billboard Posters throughout Ohio with an evaluation of the promotional effort.

Posters were of two sizes, a regular-large 9' X 21' outdoor billboard poster and a smaller 5' X 11' display poster.

The following is a report of the distribution effort and the feedback on effectiveness of the campaign.

OBJECTIVES

The major objective of the Demonstration Project was to develop a state-wide Public Awareness and Recruitment Campaign for Adult Basic Eudcation through the use of Outdoor Billboard and Display Poster Advertising.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

An original purchase of 200 large 9' X 21' posters and 100 small 5' X 11' posters was made in August, 1981. The posters were ready for distribution in September, 1981.

During August, 1981, the Ohio Department of Education identified outdoor advertising agencies, which serviced most of the geographic area of Ohio. Outdoor advertising companies cooperate with public service announcements whenever possible.

During September, 1981, all Adult Basic Education Directors in Ohio were made aware of the availability of the posters, at no cost to the local program; the procedures to follow in contacting local outdoor advertising agencies; and the process for ordering needed posters.

With the assistance of Mr. Al Hollingsworth, of Donrey Outdoor Advertising of Columbus, Ohio, five posters were displayed in the Columbus area early in September, 1981.

Donrey Outdoor Advertising displayed an additional 30 large and 20 small posters throughout Central and Southern Ohio during the fall of 1981.

By November 15, 1981, 117 large posters and all 100 small posters had been distributed to local ABE Programs in Ohio.

NOTE: Small posters were placed in vacant store front windows and displayed at meetings and other places where large crowds assembled.

During January, 1982, the project budget was increased to allow the purchase of an additional 100 small posters. Posters were received and backorders filled in February, 1982.

Some few requests for posters were received during the spring months of 1982. A report of the distribution was given at the summer director's meeting in July, 1982, some new directors requested posters at that time.

On August 4, 1982, a questionnaire was sent to all ABE Directors in Ohio requesting information on their participation in and/or effectiveness of the advertising campaign in their region. (See Attachment A - Questionnaire)

NOTE: The questionnaire generated requests for additional posters which were distributed in late August and early September, 1982.

A second questionnaire was sent on September 10, 1982, to programs not responding to the first mailing. At the time of this report, 97 out of 123 programs contacted, have responded.

The following is a compilation of the responses to the questionnaire.

Many of the comments and written responses have been generalized and/or averaged for reporting purposes.

"JOHNNY CASH" BILLBOARD PROMOTION
SEPTEMBER 1981 TO AUGUST 1982

PROGRAM FINDINGS

I. DISTRIBUTION AND DISPLAY

A. DISTRIBUTION

Forty-three ABE Directors indicated that posters had, or were, being displayed in their ABE service area or region. Eight directors indicated that posters would be displayed during the fall of 1982.

Forty-six directors indicated no posters displayed in their service area.

To date, 159 large (9' X 21') posters, and all 200 small (5' X 11') posters have been distributed.

B. DISPLAY

Eight outdoor advertising companies were listed as cooperating in their display effort.

Local ABE staff were involved in displaying many small posters in store front windows, on abandoned service stations, at public meetings, in shopping malls, parades, and pagents or festivals.

C. COST FOR DISPLAY

Seven directors reported that there was some cost involved in the poster display process.

All costs were related to labor and materials for paste-up of posters. Costs ranged from $20 to $50 per poster.

Three directors reported getting local donations for posting costs.

In one community, the local bank paid for space and posting cost.

Thirty-two directors reported no costs for display space or labor. Some noted store fronts or space was donated and local staff did paste-ups.

D. LENGTH OF TIME POSTERS DISPLAYED

Directors' reporting indicated that large billboard posters were displayed for varrying lengths Of time.

Times range from three weeks to ten months. Average length of time was approximately three months.

Outdoor advertising companies provide public service announcements on a "Space Available" basis.

E. AWARENESS OF BILLBOARD DISPLAY

Of the 46 reporting not having "Johnny Cash" Posters displayed in their ABE service area, 30 stated that they had seen posters displayed in other areas of Ohio or other states (Tennessee and West Virginia). Sixteen reported not having seen displays.

II. IMPACT OF PROMOTION

A. FEEDBACK

Forty-one responses indicated positive feedback as a result of the campaign. Comments were related to:

(a) Phone calls asking for information

(b) Enrollments motivated by posters

(c) Newspaper articles covering advertising campaign. These also created local program inquires

(d) Student & community awareness of Johnny Cash's role in "The Pride of Jesse Hallam"

(e) Student, staff, and community comments related to billboard poster displays.

B. PUBLIC AWARENESS

Responses to the question related to the effect the promotion had on public awareness of the ABE-GED Program range from

"Very limited - difficult to assess".

to

"Believe it contributed to our best enrollment yet".

and

"90 percent of the people in our community could not miss seeing the billboards. They had to become more aware".

C. EFFECT ON RECRUITMENT

Nineteen responses indicated that their program had some students recruited all or in part by the billboard promotion.

Other responses indicated that direct recruitment of new students was difficult to document.

Generally responses were favorable and indicated that this kind of promotion help the recruiting effort.

III. CONTINUED EFFORT

Almost all responses to the question related to continued state-wide public awareness and recruitment efforts were very positive, and many gave good ideas for future planning. The following list gives suggestions for future planning:

(1) Make small Johnny Cash or other celebrity (Sports figures football-baseball players would be good) window posters and bumper stickers (leave space for local phone number).

(2) Provide for local phone number on billboard posters in place of "Call your local Superintendent".

(3) Johnny Cash or other celebrity radio spot announcements.

(4) Could copies of the movie "The Pride of Jesse Hallam" be made available for local promotion.

(5) Use celebrities like Johnny Cash or sports stars on brochures and small posters for local use.

(6) More promotion on radio and television. The "Empty Bottle" television and radio spots did a good job. Could this promotion be revived.

(7) Any promotion with a "hot-line" or toll free number to get more information is good.

Generally, suggestions and comments favored use of radio and television spots with some local follow-up using brochures, window posters, flyers, etc.

Promotion of ABE using famous names of atheletes, entertainers, etc. was highly favored.

Almost all responses encouraged continued state-wide efforts in public awareness and recruitment efforts to be centered around a "theme" or "personality".

CONCLUSIONS

The "Johnny Cash" ABE-GED Public Awareness and Recruitment Campaign through the use of billboard advertising can be considered highly successful.

Much of the success can be attributed to the willingness of outdoor advertising companies to contribute space and labor to the effort. Local directors and their staff are to be commended for their work and creativity in the promotional campaign.

A true assessment of the impact of the promotion would require a random sampling of the population of the state and another sampling of all new enrollees in the areas displaying billboard posters. Time and monies limited this type of evaluation. However, the responses to the questionnaire appeared to be honest assessments of the local awareness and impact of the program.

A majority of the ABE Directors in appear to favor continued state-wide public-awareness and recruitment efforts with an emphasis put on use of radio and television media.

Finally, the project can be considered cost effective in that the total cost including purchase, distribution, and display of approximately 350+ posters is estimated to be less than $5,000.

Billboard space in Ohio ranges from $250 to $850 per month, depending on locality, plus the cost of posters.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Ohio Department of Education continue to encourage and sponsor state-wide public awareness and recruitment programs in its efforts to reduce adult illiteracy in Ohio.

ATTACHMENT "A"

OHIO ABE-GED
"JOHNNY CASH" BILLBOARD PROMOTION
QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the items that relate to your ABE Program and/or Region.

ABE Program _____ Director/Coordinator _____

I. DISTRIBUTION

(a) Do you have any "Johnny Cash" Billboard Posters displayed in your ABE service area?

( ) Yes ( ) No

(b) If the answer was yes, approximately how many large, and/or small posters have been displayed?

Large _____
Small _____

(c) Who was responsible for displaying the posters? (Company or person and address)

_____

_____

_____

(d) Was there any cost involved in getting the posters displayed?

( ) Yes ( ) No

If yes, how much, and for what service?

_____

_____

_____

(e) For about what length of time were the posters displayed in your ABE service area?

_____

_____

_____

(f) If you do not have "Johnny Cash" Posters displayed in your ABE service area, have you seen any in your region or elsewhere in Ohio?

( ) Yes ( ) No

If yes, where? _____

_____

_____

II. IMPACT

If "Johnny Cash" ABE-GED Billboard Posters have been displayed in your ABE service area or region of Ohio, please answer the following items:

(a) Did you, your Superintendent, and/or staff receive any questions, comments, or other feedback as a result of the promotion?

( ) Yes ( ) No

If yes, explain? _____

_____

_____

_____

(b) Do you believe the promotion effected public awareness of Adult Basic Education?

( ) Yes ( ) No

If yes, to what degree? _____

_____

_____

_____

(c) Do you believe the promotion had any effect on recruitment of new students?

( ) Yes ( ) No

If yes, explain? _____

_____

_____

_____

III. CONTINUED EFFORT

(a) Do you have any comments or suggestions for continuing state-wide Public Awareness and/or Recruitment efforts in behalf of Adult Basic Education?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(b) If you would like additional (or first-time) "Johnny Cash" ABE-GED Posters for your ABE Program, please send your request with this questionnaire.

Indicate the number of Large (9' X 22') and/or Small (5' X 11') needed.

Return this questionnaire to:

Max W. Way, Asst. Supt'
Scioto Valley Schools
P.O. Box 600
Piketon, OH 45661

by:

September 10, 1982